

*Gill Smith Executed on Kilmington Common April 8. 10.
for the Murder of his wife.*



The GENUINE
HISTORY
 OF THE
LIFE
 OF
GILL SMITH.

Late of *DARTFORD*, Apothecary.

Who was Executed at *Kennington-Common*, April 10, 1738,
 for the Murder of his Wife in *St. George's-Fields*.

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| <p>I. A Narrative of his most memorable Transactions from his Childhood to his Death; collected from authentic Memoirs and Accounts given by his most intimate Friends and Acquaintance.</p> <p>II. A summary View of his Trial; with Remarks.</p> <p>III. The Account given by the Rev. Mr. <i>Wilson</i> of Mr. <i>Smith's</i> Behaviour while under Sentence of Death, and at the Place of Execution</p> <p>IV. A Letter from his Mother, relating to her fruitless Endeavours to procure him a Reprieve.</p> <p>V. A Letter from an eminent</p> | <p>Teacher among the People called Quakers, exhorting him to make a full Confession and Preparation for Death.</p> <p>VI. A Letter from his Friend Mr. <i>Davies</i> with Mr. <i>Smith's</i> Answer, relating some peculiar Circumstances about his approaching Death.</p> <p>VII. Mr. <i>Smith's</i> solemn Declaration in Relation to the several Crimes charged upon him of poisoning Mr. <i>Polhill's</i> Family; of murdering his first Wife, and debauching her Sister; of attempting the Life of his own Mother; and the Murder of his last Wife with Remarks thereon.</p> |
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The Originals of all which Letters and Papers were sealed up in a Packet, and given by him at the Place of Execution, to the Rev. Mr. *Wilson*, in whose Hands they now are for the Satisfaction of any Person who has the Curiosity to see them.

L O N D O N:

Printed by *W. Rayner*, and sold by *W. Lloyd* in *Chancery-Lane*, and by the Booksellers of *London* and *Westminster*.
 (Price Six-Pence)



T H E
L I F E
O F
G I L L S M I T H.



GILL SMITH, the unhappy Subject of the ensuing Narrative, was born the 22^d of *March*, in the Year 1704, in *Kennington-Lane*, in the Parish of *Lambeth*, and was brought up strictly in the Profession of the *Quakers*; he was put to a private School, near Home, where he was kept 'till he was 10 Years of Age; and then he was sent to a boarding School at *Ringwood*, in *Hampshire*, together with one of his Brothers; he continued at that School for the Space of four Years, in which Time he made some Proficiency in the *Latin* Tongue; after which he was taken home, and sent to *Wandsworth-School*, which at that Time was an Academy for *Quaker's* Sons, and esteemed a good and proper Place for him to finish his Studies in.

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His Parents were Persons of Substance, and of Reputation; his Father being a Merchant, who traded to *Lisbon*, and the *West-Indies*; and his Mother brought a Fortune of Nine or Ten Thousand Pounds: She was eighteen Years of Age when she was married; and notwithstanding she brought so considerable a Fortune, yet Mr. *Smith*, the Father, resolved to continue his Manner of Trade, as a Merchant; and, accordingly after their Marriage, which was solemnized at *Guildford*, according to the Custom of the *Quakers*, they came and settled at *Kennington-Lane*, where Mr. *Smith* continued for some Time, and not only carried on his Business successfully, but lived in a Manner superior to most of his Neighbours, making his Dwelling-House remarkable for its Neatness and Elegance of Taste.

After some Time, having met with several Losses in Trade, and his Wife's Grand-mother dying, Mr. *Gill*, the Grand-father, being left alone, and none of his Relations near him, was continually soliciting Mr. *Smith*, and his Grand-daughter, to come and live with him; which, after much Persuasion, and Mr. *Smith* and his Spouse growing weary of the Town, they consented to, and accordingly went from *Kennington-Lane*, to live at *Esheen*, near *Godalmin*, in *Surry*, where they continued many Years.

Before Mr. *Smith*, and his Wife, left *London*, they had three Children born to them, namely, two Sons and a Daughter; the eldest of whom was *Gill Smith*, the History of whose Life we are now about to relate.

Being the Darling of his Mother, he was too much caressed and indulged in his Infancy, which joining his Inclination, naturally vicious, was the
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unhappy Occasion of the many Scenes of Villainy which he has been since concerned in; the last, which was the most notorious of all, and for which he deservedly suffer'd, proving his natural Bent to Wickedness, and Proneness to the most horrid Crimes that could be committed, even so far as not to stick at any Thing.

He even in his Youth discovered the Badness of his Principles and vicious Disposition, by an Aptness to every Thing bad, by abandoning all Honour, and Honesty, and by shewing an absolute Aversion to all Religion, and every Thing sacred; even then, giving himself up to all Profaneness, and Immorality.

His Friends (as before observed, being Persons of Substance) were inclinable to give him an Education, as they thought, not only agreeable to their Circumstances, but to the Station they might reasonably imagine he would appear in the World. Accordingly he was put to School, at a Place called *Ringwood* in *Hampshire*; but between his stubborn Disposition on the one Hand, and his having none of the greatest Capacity on the other, he profited very little from his Master's Instructions.

However, having made some little Progress in Learning, enough to qualify him to go through the World in a decent Manner, in a midling Station of Life, his Parents began to look out for some creditable Employment, or Trade, in which he might appear as a Person who had been well educated, and spend his Life in an easy agreeable Manner, both to himself and his Relations.

But, how often do Parents study the Welfare of their Children, when their depraved Appetites defeat the best concerted Measures for their Good!

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Of this, nothing can be a more flagrant Instance than the unhappy *Gill Smith*.

His Parents, from his Infancy had designed him for a Physician, or something of that Kind, and therefore, after searching in the most prudent Manner they could for a Master who was proper for their Son, at last fixed their Choice on an eminent Apothecary in *Lombard-Street*, who to his Profession, which they esteemed as reputable as genteel, was a Man of good Temper, sober, and religious; and for which Reason they the more readily intrusted their Son to his Care.

Accordingly, the Agreement being settled between them, he was bound Apprentice to him, and for some Time, Things went very well; the Master was indulgent, the Apprentice content, and his Friends entirely satisfied, for he was of an affable Temper, and gained the Respect of his Master: But, Alas! how hard is it to restrain Nature! He seemed to be too fond of Liberty, and did not well brook so strict a Confinement to Business.

He was of a gay Disposition, which led him to frequent much Company, and one Spiriting upon another to taste the Pleasures of Life, made him quite dissatisfied with being confined to the Business of a Shop, and what he in his Flights was pleased to call *the dull Attendance of a Citizen*; and set his Mind upon Roving, and wanting to see the World. He had, besides, by his being frequently engaged in Company, run himself considerably in Debt, and being unable to satisfy his Duns (which were mostly Publicans) without acquainting them, and having made use of all the evasive Shifts he could invent to put them off, but finding nothing would do but his laying down the Money, which he could not then have done, had not an unexpected Incident

dent happened : His Father, during the Time he had been in the Country, lived as a Farmer, thereby to improve his Estate ; and sending some Lambs to Town, to be sold, he desired the Money might be paid to his Son *Gill*, in order to defray some Debts, which he had acquainted his Father with ; and the Remainder was to be returned. But *Gill* took Care to convert the Whole to his own Use : And, falling into bad Company, he not only did this, but in order to support his Extravagances, he was induced to cheat his Master, by taking Money out of the Drawer, at several Times, to the Value of twenty Pounds ; which his Master missing, contrived a Stratagem to detect him. On his being detected, he confessed his taking twenty Pounds ; but it may be reasonably supposed, he took five times that Sum, considering his extravagant and profuse Way of living, which could not be supported with a Trifle. But his Master being unwilling to expose him, took no further Notice of the Affair, than to give him good Advice, and by endeavouring to the utmost of his Power to reclaim him from the wicked Courses he had taken ; but finding all his Endeavours were fruitless, and fearing that he might do him some farther Damage, he thought it would be the best Way to send him Abroad, and to which the following Circumstance very much conduced.

He had been several Times (as is customary) with young Surgeons, to see the Bodies dissected at *Surgeon's Hall* ; but once, in particular, coming from beholding the Body of a female Criminal, who had been dissected that Day, a Maid, who lived at a Publick House which he used to frequent, and who had always express'd a great Regard for him, insomuch that she seem'd to be particularly

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particularly fond of him, inticed him to an amorous Conversation; his natural Inclination, which, as he has declared himself, and as his Actions shew, always directed him to be fond of the fair Sex, he being then a Youth, and she assisting and encouraging him in that Bent of Mind, soon brought him to her Lure; after some little Familiarities had passed between them, she insisted, before she granted him the last Favour, that he should either marry her, or promise her that he would, in the most solemn Manner that could be. She having a great Ascendancy over his Affections, soon prevailed on him to do what she would have him; and he signed a Paper, wherein he engaged himself to marry her so soon as he should be out of his Time: Upon this, the artful Creature yielded to his Desires, proposing the greatest Esteem for him that can possibly be imagined. They for some Time carried on their Intrigues, unknown to any One; but at Length, by his repeated Debaucheries, not only with her, but others, he found he had got the Venereal Distemper, and in such a Manner that he could not be cured without undergoing a Salivation. His Master being apprized of it, was so very indulgent as to assist him with Necessaries, 'till he was cured, tho' he sent him from his House; but finding that there was no Hope of reclaiming him, he would not suffer him to re-enter his Doors, and informed his Parents of it. This was the first Time they had ever heard any Complaint of him. And his Master, notwithstanding the ill Treatment he had received from him, sent him to Sea, as Surgeon of a Ship, and he went to *Barbadoes* in that Capacity, on Board the *Sea-Nymph*, Captain *Pritchard*, who, when he came Home, gave him a tolerable good Character.

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It may not be amiss to relate here an odd Incident that happened to him at *Barbadoes*: A Mate of another Ship that was there at the same Time that he was, happen'd to have his Arm shatter'd very much, and applied to him for a Cure, he undertook it; and judging it necessary to cut the Arm off, and, having no Instrument for that Purpose, he borrowed a Carpenter's Saw, and with that made the Amputation, and effected the Cure.

His Ingratitude to his Master, at that Time, was the highest that could be; for, besides making him Surgeon of the Ship, as before mentioned, he trusted him with a Venture, which *Smith* disposed of, and converted to his own Use, without ever accounting for it to his Master, who nevertheless did not offer to trouble him or give him any Uneasiness upon that Score.

Smith in going as Surgeon of a Ship, had an Opportunity of very much improving himself in his Profession, and being naturally gay, and fond of Company, was pretty much respected; happy for him, had he still continued so, but it is the hardest Thing in the World, for a Man to get the better of ill Habits. He had a longing Mind to come to *England*, and wanted to get to his former Extravagance, for it was the greatest Hardship imaginable for him to keep within due Bounds.

He came from Sea in the Year 1727, or the Beginning of the Year 1728, after which he made a Visit or two to his Friends in *Surry*, in one of which, his Mother having prepar'd a Pot of Sage Tea for her own drinking; but the Father, unhappily for him (tho' he had hardly ever been known to drink Tea) took a large Draught of it, and the Moment after he had so done declar'd he

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was poison'd, the Taste thereof being nasty and cankerous, and worse than any Mineral Water, or Water wherein old Iron had been steep'd for some Time; and immediately after his drinking it, he desir'd to know if there was any Oil in the House, and finding a Pint-Bottle near half full, he drank it off at one Draught in less than a Minute after he had drank the Tea, and then went to his Son *Gill* who was just gone to Bed, and his Father finding him fast asleep wak'd him, and told him he was poison'd by drinking some Tea; upon which, without any Surprize, *Gill* ask'd if any body else had drank any, but being told that no body else had, and that he had drank the Oil afterwards, *Gill* told him he thought it was the best Thing he could do, and went to sleep again; the Father went straightways to *Godalmin*, to an Apothecary who is very much noted in that Country, and offering him his Hand to feel his Pulse he seem'd surpriz'd, and ask'd him what he had been doing? When the Father informing him what had happen'd, and what he had taken by way of Relief; he told him he could not do better, and brought him another large Glass of Oil, and order'd him a Vomit, which he took that Night, and in the Morning he took some *Glauber* Salts; and by that Means found no Injury for some Time; and to prove that what he drank was Poison, he made an Experiment, by giving a Dog a very small Quantity of what was left, which in a few Hours convuls'd him so that he could not stand, and within a few Hours after the poor Creature dy'd. But tho' he escap'd the Effects of it for some Time, yet at length what confirm'd him that he was poison'd, was his losing not only the Skin from the Soles of his Feet, but
even

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even his Toe-Nails, which all came off, and hath left a Tenderness in his Feet ever since. 'Tis not imagin'd that this Poison was intended for the Father, because he very seldom drank any Tea; but it must naturally be thought that his Design was to make away with his Mother, that after her Death he might enjoy the Settlement which then came to him; and the rather, because it is notorious thro' the whole Course of his Life, that he would stick at nothing to raise Money, were the Means never so vile or base. And what will incline every one to believe him Guilty of this most detestable Attempt was, that from that Time being inform'd that his Friends suspected him of it, tho' they had nothing that would amount to an immediate Proof, he came to *London*, absconded from them, and they never heard any Thing of him till he had ingratiated himself into Mr. *Collins's* Family at *Crayford* in *Kent*, which happen'd in the following Manner:

Having acquir'd some Money by his going Abroad, and wronging his Master of the Venture, as before mention'd; upon his coming to *London* from his Friends in *Surry* he gave himself up to his former Extravagances, appear'd in a handsome genteel Manner, tho' quite devoted to his Pleasures, and minding no Business at all; he renew'd his Acquaintance with several of his raking Companions with whom he had convers'd before his going to Sea; and their mutual Examples, like all others of that Kind, did but excite each other to run greater Lengths than otherwise they might perhaps have done, had they been separated; their Time was chiefly spent in Taverns, Gaming-Houses, and other Scenes of Debauchery; and as few of them had sufficient of themselves to sup-
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port them in that Scene of Life, it put 'em upon looking after young Women who had Fortunes, and whom they endeavour'd to ensnare, to support their Extravagances, without considering the Ruin that must inevitably attend the unhappy Ladies thus deceiv'd: In short, like too many young Fellows of the Age, they all set up for profess'd *Fortune-Hunters*.

Among other Taverns which they daily frequented, the *King's-Head* at *Norton Falgate* was one, and 'twas by being acquainted there that *Gill* had the first Sight of Mrs. *Collins* his first Wife; he being a good Companion, and endeavouring to put on a good Behaviour, whereby he very much disguis'd his Actions from the World, was frequently invited by the Master of the Tavern to go with him to his Country-House, which was at *Crayford* near Mr. *Collins*.

Gill, tho' he was educated and brought up as a *Quaker*, yet not being much attach'd to any Religion, made no Scruple of going to Church, or any other Place of publick Worship, however averse it might be to his first Principles; 'twas by these Means, and frequently visiting the Parish Church of *Crayford*, of which Mr. *Collins* was Minister, that he had an Opportunity of seeing Mr. *Collins's* Family, the Daughters who were all agreeable young Ladies, delighted him much, but more so when he was inform'd that, beside Mr. *Collins's* being able to give them Fortunes suitable to their Merit, they were nearly related to some of the best Families in that Part of the Country, who consequently might promote them much; this fir'd him immediately, and he singled out the eldest as the Object of his Passion: He had nothing then to do but to be acquainted with the
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Family, which by his natural good Address, and by doing them several little Services, he at last effected: The Brothers grew fond of his Company, and Mr. *Collins* himself was so pleas'd with his seeming frank, honest, Way of proceeding, that he invited him to his House, and us'd him in the same tender affectionate Manner as the rest of his Family.

He had now no Obstacle to prevent his making the most pressing Addresses to the young Lady; she was deceiv'd by his winning Behaviour, and even receiv'd them with Pleasure; he continued there about half a Year, in which Time he became entire Master of her Affections, and she consented to marry him, provided her Father would give Consent; he undertook to open the Affair to Mr. *Collins*, he had no Objection, except his being a *Quaker*, but *Gill* no Ways scrupulous in that Point, assur'd him, that he was weary of their Errors, and would readily embrace the Rites of the Church of *England*; accordingly, upon his own pressing Desire, he recanted *Quakerism*, and was baptiz'd at *Croyford* by Mr. *Collins* himself. And further, to make him still more willing to the Match, he inform'd him of what he had in Reversion at the Death of his Mother; Mr. *Collins* thinking his Daughter would be very happy in such a Husband, and that they might live very happily together, consented to their Marriage, but told him, that as he was determin'd never to do any Thing that was not entirely consistent with Justice and Honour, he thought it would be proper to acquaint his Father (Mr. *Smith*) with the Affair, and know if he was willing it should be consummated: *Gill* did not very well relish that, but finding there was no other Way

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Way to effect his Designs, he at last agreed to it; and accordingly Mr. *Collins* sent his Chariot to Mr. *Smith* at *Esheen* to bring him to *Crayford*: Mr. *Smith* came and confirm'd all that *Gill* had told him in Relation to the Reversion of the Mother's Settlement; Mr. *Collins* was pleas'd to hear *Gill* had not deceiv'd him, and conceiv'd a higher Opinion of him than ever. Mr. *Collins* further enquir'd of Mr. *Smith*, if he would give any Thing with his Son upon his Marriage? But he informing him he could not, Mr. *Collins* made Answer, That if he would, he would give as much (let it be what it would) with his Daughter, otherwise he would not be ty'd to give her any Thing, but it should be left to his own Option whether he would or no, which being agreed on, no other Difficulties were started, and their Nuptials were soon after consummated at *Crayford*.

The Father return'd home, and Mr. *Collins* advising *Gill* to settle in his Business somewhere near him in the Country, whereby he might be enabled to do him the more Service; *Gill* accordingly went to *Dartford* in *Kent*, where he met with a good Reception; and being inform'd, that a Surgeon, or Apothecary, who was any Ways expert in his Business, might live very well there, he look'd about some Time, and at last met with a Shop to his liking; and having acquainted Mr. *Collins* with it, he very much approv'd thereof, and was at the Expence of fitting up the Shop in a handsome manner, and furnishing the House suitable for the Reception of him and his Wife: After he was thus settled, Mr. *Collins*, as a further Instance of his Favour, procur'd him the Place of Surgeon and Apothecary to the Parish-House there; which, tho' the Salary was small,
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and no great Profit accru'd therefrom, yet was a Means of recommending him to Business, and advancing his Reputation.

Gill and his Wife, for some Time, liv'd happily together, he met with Success, and was very much respected all over that Part of the Country, but he could not wear the Mask long, and Cash coming in upon him a little plenty, his former Itch of Gaming and Extravagance return'd, he began to neglect his Business, being too often from home, tho' his Wife, by her Diligence and Skill in attending the Shop, in some measure supported his Credit, and kept up the Business.

Mr. *Collins* thinking his Daughter would not like to leave her Brothers and Sisters all at once, frequently sent one or other of them to visit her, and in particular one of them who had been brought up at her Grandmother's, was taken from thence and sent to live with *Gill* and his Wife, as a Companion for her. His Wife was of a sober sedate Temper, and capable of making him an happy agreeable Helpmate, and not inclined to Levity or Gaiety: The Sister was of a more alert, gay Disposition, which suiting more *Gill's* roving fickle Inclination, excited in him a Desire which no Excuse can palliate; his vicious Inclinations broke forth anew, his Wife began to grow tiresome to him, and nothing ran in his Head but obtaining the Favour of the Sister; the Freedom of a Brother-in-law gave him all convenient Occasions to see her; he was of an artful winning Behaviour, with a Tongue smooth enough to deceive any one; and she, like most others of her Sex, of a Temper too apt to be seduc'd by Flattery: In short, she abandon'd all Regard to her Sister, and being overcome by his artful Persuasion, it was thought

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thought she consented to his Desires, even in the Life-Time of her Sister, and they continu'd their Caresses; tho' there was no positive Proof, yet they were very much suspected.

His living at a much higher Rate than his Comings-in would allow, his Races, Gaming, and other repeated Extravagancies, had well nigh exhausted his Stock: Mr. *Collins* reprimanded him strongly, and advised him to amend his Course of Life. *Gill*, who never wanted Persuasion to deceive any one, promised a Reformation, and that for the Future he should have no Reason to censure his Behaviour; but he had no other View in these Promises than to draw some more Money from his Father-in-Law. Mr. *Collins* was willing to give him all possible Encouragement, yet not to injure the rest of his Children; told him, that he thought he had done sufficiently for him, and that now his own Friends ought to assist him, and that he would endeavour to prevail with them so to do; and accordingly sent to the Father and Mother, who, by his persuasion, agreed to dispose of the Settlement, in order that *Gill* might satisfy his Creditors, and appear in the same manner as before, hoping that he would thereby be enabled to follow his Business and make them Satisfaction for so doing, especially, as Mr. *Collins* told them, that the Money to be raised by that means, would not only pay his Debts, but be of singular Advantage to him in his Trade. The Mother consented, and the Estate was sold for One thousand three hundred Pounds, on or about *Lady-day*, in the Year 1730, out of which the Father received 600*l.* *Gill* had 400*l.* and his Mother the remaining 300*l.* which was all that was left out of the large Fortune she brought into the Family. *Gill's Money*

ney was paid him by one Mr. *Baker*, here in *London*; though some say he received it at *Guildford*, and coming to *London* he left 100 l. in a Friend's Hand till he should call for it. This Sum not being enough to gratify his Wishes, Necessity or Villainy put him upon the following Expedient to raise more, viz. to sue the Hundred: He laid his Scheme in the best manner that could be, for in a short Time coming to *London* to call for the 100 l. he had left, he took Care to have Witnesses sufficient who saw him receive it, he then set out for *Dartford*, where when he came, he took Care to spread a Report of his being robb'd, tho' from several convincing Circumstances every Body believed, that the Report was not true; yet he confidently affirmed it, and gave out that he intended to sue the Hundred. His Story was as plausible as could be, that as he was going to *Dartford*, somewhere in the Hundred of *Ruxley*, as he was riding along by a Wood-side, he saw two Men leaning over a Gate, who came up to him, knock'd him off his Horse, and took from him the One hundred Pounds, Part of which was a 20 l. Note, which was sew'd in his Hat; and that after they had robb'd him, they made off into the Wood: However the Officers of the Hundred having entertained a very bad Opinion of him, were resolved to give him all the Trouble they could, and to put him upon the Proof they stood Trial; but his proving the Receipt of the Money, that he set out of Town with the same, and his swearing positively to the Time and Place, when and where he was robb'd, the Jury gave him a Verdict; and they were obliged to pay him the hundred Pounds he swore to, as likewise the Coasts of Suit, amounting in the whole to the Sum of One hundred and

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eleven Guineas, and which the High Constable of the Hundred paid him accordingly. The High Constable went to see him after he was condemned, and taxing him with it, told him, that tho' the Money was paid, yet the Country-people had a Suspicion that he never was robb'd, and therefore as he was a dying Man, and it could avail him nothing at that Time, they begg'd to be satisfy'd on that Head.—*Smith* paused a while as if in Confusion, and then gave him this evasive Answer, *If I was not robb'd, how came the Jury to give me such a Verdict?* and would make no other Reply: Nay, tho' he was so successful in his Villainy, his own Lawyer who was concern'd for him in the Cause, has often declared, that tho' *Smith* had sworn it so positively, yet he verily believed he was never robb'd.

His unlawful Inclination to his Wife's Sister still continued, and as she had the greatest Ascendancy over his Affections, he spent most of his Time with her, which his Wife perceiving, gave her no small Uneasiness, and frequent Bickerings ensu'd thereon; this occasioning continual Jars, made him very weary of the matrimonial State: In short, he determin'd to free himself from it; but as leaving her would not only have occasion'd much Talk, and intirely destroy'd his Business there, he being pretty quick in forming his Resolutions, and sticking at nothing to accomplish his Designs, in order to make the quickest Work he could with it, he determin'd to end her Life some Way or another; unluckily for her, an Opportunity offer'd.

A Gentleman of their Acquaintance had presented her with a Quantity of Tea, which she liked extremely, and was fond of drinking it; 'tis thought

thought that he took an Opportunity of conveying something among that Tea, which brought her to her End; for she was taken ill all of a sudden, and lay two or three Days, and then died in strong Convulsions; in which Time she declared to her Friends and Neighbours who came to see her, that she was poisoned, and that it was by drinking Part of the Tea which the Gentleman had presented her with, and that she wished he had kept it to himself; however it was, this soon carried her off; tho' the People of *Dartford* could not bring any certain Proof of this Affair, yet it being the general receiv'd Opinion that it was he, it very much hurt him in his Business, and several Circumstances afterwards occur'd, which confirm'd them in their Suspicion.

It has been reported that he was likewise guilty of making away two Children which he had by his first Wife, but we are assured that he had no Children by her, except an *Embrio* of which she miscarried; and that, on the contrary, his vicious Courses had so destroy'd his Virility, as had render'd him utterly incapable of propagating his Species.

'Twas in the Time of his living at *Dartford*, and while his first Wife was alive, that he came acquainted with the unhappy One whom he has since murder'd. The Means by which he came acquainted with her were these; *Gill Smith*, and two of his Wife's Brothers, one of whom was an Attorney, and the other us'd the Sea; both of them as extravagant as *Smith*, us'd frequently to come to Town from *Dartford*, and the House that they chiefly frequented was the *St. Christopher's Inn* in *Southwark*, then kept by *Mrs. Miller*, but since by her Son *Mr. Miller*, the Father of his

second unhappy Wife; they us'd this House for a considerable Time; the Daughter was then very young, and at that Time escap'd their Notice: By their repeated Extravagancies they were frequently out of Money, and having each of them run up Scores (as was their constant Practice wherever they went) they quitted the House, and did not go near it till a considerable Time afterwards.

In the mean Time he continued at *Dartford*, as I have before related; and, as if he could not squander away his Money fast enough, he kept a little Mare, which he several times match'd to run, but always lost; and to shew an Instance of his Folly, he once hir'd a Mare of an Ostler in the Town, which the Man would have sold him for 4 *l.* but he truly very wisely would not buy her, but kept her till the Hire of her came to 15 *l.* for which the other su'd him, and recover'd the Whole.

Another Instance of his Folly was; coming to *London* he went to drink with some Gentlemen of his Acquaintance at the *Sun* on *Fish-street-hill*, from whence adjourning to a Coffee-house, *Smith* told them he would treat them with a Play, to which they consented; and accordingly told them he had a little Business to dispatch first, and would meet them at a Time and Place which he appointed near the Play-house: They went accordingly, and he in the mean Time made use of one of the poorest Inventions that could be to raise even a Trifle; a Shift which none but one of the lowest Rank of Villains would have been guilty of: He sends a Porter in the Name of one of the Gentlemen with whom he had been in Company, to the Gentleman's House to desire the Maid to send his Surtout Coat,

Coat, and to tell her he was going to the Play, and should stay late: The Maid without any manner of Scruple sent it by the Porter, who carry'd it to him at the Coffee-house. When the Gentleman return'd home, the Maid surpriz'd to see him without it, ask'd him where he had left it? He as much surpriz'd to hear her ask the Question, said, he knew nothing of it, and had never sent for it, when she inform'd him in what Manner she had deliver'd it: *Smith* was never suspected, nor so much as thought of, because he then appear'd handsome, and in a creditable Manner, till one Day the Gentleman going to the Coffee-house, and telling the Story how his Servant had been trick'd out of his Coat, the Woman of the House overheard, and told him, That the Gentleman who was with him such a Day had sent for it after he was gone, and describ'd *Smith* so exactly as left him no Room to doubt his having it. The Gentleman next made it his Business to find out the Porter, and he inform'd where he might meet with him; and was told he was at the *Bull-Inn* in *Bishopsgate-street*; the Gentleman accordingly took the Porter with him to the Inn, and bid him stay below whilst he went up to *Smith*, which he did, and found him in Bed, who receiv'd the Gentleman with all the Complaisance imaginable, as if he had been the dearest Friend he had: But the Gentleman immediately told him what he came about, and demanded the Coat, which made him very angry, and swore and bluster'd at the Gentleman for suspecting his Honour: *Come, Come, Mr. Smith* (says the Gentleman) *you can't carry it off so genteely or quietly as you imagine: I have got the Porter below whom you sent for it.* Upon which he boutc'd still the more, and dar'd the Gentleman

Gentleman to produce him, either thinking he could not, or else imagining the Porter would not know him again, so harden'd was his Disposition ! but when the Gentleman produc'd the Porter, and pointed out to him all the Circumstances, he fell on his Knees, begg'd the Gentleman not to expose him, and he would satisfy him; then told him where it was pawn'd, which the Gentleman was good-humour'd enough to redeem, and say no more of the Affair. Tho' I have since been inform'd he was so honest as to give him the Money again; which I would not willingly omit, as being the only generous Thing he ever did in his Life.

Quickly after, his first Wife dy'd in the Manner I have before related. He had Modesty enough not to make publick the Affair carry'd on between him and her Sister; tho' his doing it since has occasion'd every-body to imagine he poison'd his first Wife, that she might not disturb him in his Amours.

The Sister continued with him in the House during all, or most of the Time of his first Wife's Life, until her Death; quickly after which his Landlord perceiving how all his Affairs were running to Ruin, seized for the Rent that was due, and he was arrested and carried to the County Jail in *Canterbury*, from whence he removed himself by *Habeas Corpus* to the *King's-Bench*, where he got the Rules, on or about the 28th of *March*, 1733. and lodged near the *Bird-cage*: His Sister-in-Law, who could by no means bear to be absent from him, followed him; and tho' she did not actually lodge with him, yet she used to visit him every Day: And it is reported, that an old Gentleman taking a Liking to the Sister, *Smith* was actually

actually Villain enough to make a Property of her, by prostituting her to his Embraces; upon the Income of which he subsisted while he was in the Rules. However, if he did, it shewed as if she was not unwilling to do any Thing that could contribute to his Advantage, for it was by her means that he was cleared from Prison, the Grandmother with whom she had been brought up dying, left her all she had, as likewise made her Executrix to the Will. She no sooner received what was left, than she employ'd it to release him, which was done accordingly, and he return'd to *Dartford*, in as grand a Manner as ever.

During this Interval, and in the Time he was in the Rules he took it in his Head to frequent the *St. Christopher's* Inn again, the Widow who kept it when he us'd it before, being very old, had made her Son, *Mr. Miller* (the Father of the Wife he has since murder'd) Landlord of the Inn, *Smith* being what is call'd a Good-natured Fellow, and very facetious, induc'd the Landlord to delight much in his Company, and spent most of his Time with him whilst he was in Town.

It was his being at this Inn, and frequently dining with the Family, that he got into Company with his late Wife, who was lately come from the Boarding-School, and an agreeable young Girl.

However, tho' he and the Landlord were so intimate together, he took an Opportunity to desire him to pay off the old Score: But he, with his usual Address, easily got off by telling some plausible Lie or another. Accordingly, with a formal Countenance, he told the Landlord, as a great Secret, he had marry'd a second Wife, who was a Gentlewoman of a good Family in *London*; and that nobody could prevent her having a good Fortune:

Fortune: But that, as yet, he did not care to let her Friends know it; and that he was very much concern'd, for she was then very ill; but he hop'd in a Week's Time he should be able to take her down to *Dartford*, in a Manner that should suit her Station; and then he would endeavour to make it up with her Friends. By this fair Pretence the poor Landlord was deceiv'd, and suffer'd him to run further in Debt, to the Amount of about 9*l*. which is yet unpaid. Happy had it been if he had stopp'd there, but he was not content with running in his Debt, without ever designing to pay him; but he contriv'd how to get into the Daughter's Affections, and deprive her Father of her, and since that, her of her Life.

By being at the Inn, as I said before, he had frequent Opportunities of conversing with her, and by his fair Speeches he soon worm'd himself into her Heart: Whether the Father perceiv'd it or no is not known, or upon what Account it was, but she was sent to live in the City, where *Smith* was not able to find her for some Time. At last, by the Assistance of a Maid-Servant, who liv'd with his Wife's Father, he found out where she liv'd. He then redoubled his Attempts to gain her Favour, and to that Purpose frequently wrote to her, and got the Maid to carry his Letters; some of which have been since found, and are as follow:

My dear Betsey,

I F you knew what a Torment I have endur'd since seeing you last. Pity, if not Love, would incline you to declare in my Favour: I am on a Rack till I see you, to tell you how much I adore you. Tho'
your

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your Father's ill Treatment has forced you from home, you shall always find Relief, if you will accept of it from One who only lives to serve you.

P. S. The Bearer will bring me Word where, and when I may see you, if you will favour me with that Happiness.

Gill Smith.

It is suppos'd he sent this Letter by the Maid before mention'd, and waited somewhere near the Place she liv'd at, in hopes she might be prevail'd upon to come and meet him; but by his next, it seems as if she did not.

My dear Life,

YOUR Unkind Answer by the Maid to my last, has put me in the utmost Despair; I conjure you, as you know my Love for you is so great, that you would favour me with an Interview; what can you fear from one that doats on you, and will as long as I shall live. For Heaven's sake, let me see you, for I have something of the utmost Importance to communicate to you; your Compliance with this brings Happiness, and your Refusal endless Misery

To Yours, &c.

G. Smith.

At last, by the Maid's Persuasion, and being, perhaps, not averse to his Addresses, she agreed to see him; and after that, they frequently met at a Tavern adjacent to where she liv'd. In these

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Interviews he at length became entire Master of her Affections; and, at his Request, she consented to marry him, which was accordingly done as private as possible.

It is thought that the main Motive of *Smith's* marrying her was, his having heard that she had some Money left her by a Relation; and what seems, in some measure, to confirm this Surmise, is the following Circumstance: About that Time, *Smith* being upon the *Exchange*, and dress'd in a most elegant Manner, was met by an old Acquaintance of his, who ask'd him jokingly, What he did in Town dress'd in that manner? *Smith* reply'd, That he was come from *Westminster*, where he had been a courting. Well! says the Other, And are you almost marry'd? I don't know how it is, said he, I have two Strings to my Bow; the Girl at *Westminster* has 400*l.* ready Money, the other lives here in the City, and she has only 40*l.* a Year in Reversion after the Death of an Uncle. Now, you may depend upon it, I am for the ready Money, but she stands, Shill I Shall I! That I don't know what to make of her; but however, if she don't come to soon, I shall take the other, whom I know I can have when I will.

Accordingly, after they were marry'd he took her down to *Dartford*, and told every body he had marry'd a Fortune; he was in the same Condition with the Landlord as before, in regard to Rent, who thinking he had actually marry'd a Fortune, was induc'd to stay somewhat longer than he otherwise would have done; he, for some Time, behav'd tolerably well to her; but his Wife's Death, and his suing the Hundred, had entirely ruin'd his Character in the Country, and consequently spoil'd his Business: But what render'd

der'd him still more infamous, was the following Affair;

He convers'd privately, as I said before, with his first Wife's Sister; she was a Favourite of a Relation of her's, one Justice *Polhill*, who liv'd at ——— in *Kent*; the Justice promis'd her, when he dy'd, that he would leave her 70*l.* and all his Wearing-Apparel. *Smith* heard of this, and was determin'd not to be long out of the Money; but there was another Niece, who liv'd with the Justice, who was continually endeavouring to supplant *Smith's* Lady in the Uncle's good Graces; therefore it was absolutely necessary she should be remov'd: In short, it is a current Opinion about *Dartford*, That he made up something to carry off her and her Uncle, which not only did that, but likewise dispatch'd several others; for six or seven of the Family dy'd all in one Week. These Things had made him so remarkable, that he was under a Necessity of leaving *Dartford*; and what oblig'd him to it, was another Apothecary coming to set up against him. Accordingly, having receiv'd the Uncle's Legacy, he and his Lady (who then pass'd for his Wife) came to *London*; and lodg'd at the *White Horse-Inn* in *Fleet-street*.

Another Thing which obliged him to leave *Dartford* was, the Landlord had been often deluded by his fair Promises, but finding no Fortune of his Wife coming to him, and the Rent still growing in Arrears, once more seized his Goods. He told his Wife he would go to *London*, and see if he could raise the Money, and would then return and make all Things easy: Accordingly he came away, and left his Wife in the most miserable Condition that could be, and had it not

been for the Goodness of the Landlord, who took her home to his own House, and maintained her several Months, she must inevitably have perished; and after she had staid there some Time, hearing no News of him, she was obliged to go to Service to maintain herself: But by some Accident or other, when *Smith* and *Mrs. Collins* came to the *White-horse* Inn, and passed for Man and Wife, this unhappy Wretch had some Information of it, and was continually haunting him, so that he must have quitted the Place, and was preparing so to do, when *Mrs. Collins* was taken suddenly ill with the Small-Pox. *Smith* had managed Matters so, that no Body suspected but he was married to *Mrs. Collins*: He pretended that she had a good Fortune at her own Disposal, but as he had married her against her Friends Consent, that they strove all they could to keep him out of it. *Smith* perceiving that his pretended Spouse could not live long, drew up a sham Will, wherein she left him to the Amount of 1500 l. or upwards, which was said to be in the Hands of some fictitious Persons or other. This Will she was to sign seemingly unknown to him, which was done accordingly, and the Will put up carefully in her Trunk. Some little Time after she died of the Small-Pox (and was not poisoned by him as has been reported) upon which he takes some Persons for Evidences, as if he was quite ignorant of the Affair, to see what she had left, and having searched every Thing, he at last opens the Trunk, and to his seeming great Joy and Surprize, found the Will, which they opened and read.

As it is now the Fashion of the World to behave well to Persons when they have Money, how much soever they were slighted before;
so

so this Fetch of *Smith's* deceived those who had trusted him; they all gave him fresh Credit, and seemed eager which should serve him first. Therefore, the first Thing he did was to order an handsome Funeral; and accordingly he applied to One Mr. *Morris*, an eminent Undertaker, in *Fleetstreet*, and shewing him the Will, told him, that though it was not in his Power then to pay for her Funeral as he could wish it; yet that Mr. *Morris* might see it would be shortly, and if in the mean Time he would give him Credit for it, that he should be handsomly paid. Mr. *Morris* being over-persuaded by *Smith's* artful Tongue, of which he was a perfect Master, and imagining the Will to be a true one, consented to his Request, and she was very decently interred. He next made the same Excuse to one Mr. *Scammandine*, a Taylor, whom he took in for two Suits of Mourning; and so Mr. *Humphreys* Perrwig-maker, for Wigs; and besides this, he run a fresh Score upon the Strength of the Will, with one *Hill*, that kept the Tap at the *White Horse*-Inn, for Lodging and Necessaries. After this, he returned to *Dartford*, and staid there some Time, thinking, by that Means, to delude his Creditors, whom he still fed with the Notion of his receiving the pretended Wife's Fortune. But their Patience was quite wore out, and Mr. *Morris* not caring to stay any longer, had him sued. Accordingly *Smith* was arrested at his Suit, and once more carried to *Canterbury Goal*. His Wife knew nothing all this While what was become of him; and happy had it been for her, if she had never seen him more, but Fate decreed it otherwise.

He lay a considerable Time in *Canterbury Goal*, reduced to the lowest Extremity, when a good natured Publican, who lives near *Shooter's Hill*, and who

who had known *Smith*, when in his Prosperity, seeing Mr. *Morris* very often that Way, took Occasion to mention *Smith* to him; and telling him what deplorable Circumstances he was in, in the Goal, and that he could by no Means do any Thing to satisfy the Debt there, he at last prevailed so far upon Mr. *Morris*'s good Nature, that he consented *Smith* should be discharged; which he had no sooner done, than he was informed that *Smith* had some how raised Friends or Money to obtain a *Habeas Corpus* to bring him over to the *Fleet*.

He was very much surprized when he was brought to Mr. *Corbet*'s House, to find his Wife there as a common Servant, where they frequently having Quarrels, *Corbet*, to prevent it, lock'd him up in the Inside of the *Fleet*, and she, about six Months after, was discharged from her Place. It is about two Years ago since he came over to the *Fleet*; she, being reduced to the greatest Necessity, was oblig'd to run of Errands, for the People confined in the *Fleet*. He continued confin'd, and by assisting his Fellow-Prisoners with his Advice, when they stood in Need of any Medicines, &c. he was very much respected by them, insomuch that Mr. *Davies*, who keeps the Tap there, had Faith enough to trust him to a considerable Value. Upon the Passing of the late Act of Parliament, for Relief of insolvent Debtors, it being judg'd that he was intitled to it, they allowed him the Liberty of the Rules; after which he, handsomly dress'd, appeared well, tho' it often surpris'd several, and put them upon Enquiry, Surmises being formed that he went on the Highway, because he would frequently hire a Mare of *Jone*'s, at the Elephant and Castle in *Fleet-Lane*, and give six Shillings for her, from Two o'Clock in the Afternoon, and would

would perhaps return her all in a Lather at one in the Morning. However, whether he did rob, or not, 'tis certain that he would make Use of any Method to raise Money; and that put him upon perpetrating the horrid Fact for which he suffered, and of which the following Account, taken from his Trial, is the most particular that can be.

*A Summary View of the Tryal of
Mr. Gill Smith. With Re-
marks.*

MR. *Smith* having, to the last Moment of his Life, deny'd he had any Hand in the Murder of his Wife, we shall give the Reader an Account of the Trial, and a summary View of the Evidence on both Sides.

As great Strefs is laid on the Transaction between him and the Insurance Office, and made use of as a strong Argument of his Guilt, it will be necessary to give a particular Recital of that Affair.

Mr. *Fletcher*, Clerk to the *London* Insurance Office, swore, that Mr. *Smith* desir'd him to inform him of the Nature of insuring his Wife's Life, and importun'd him very much to assist him in getting a Policy for that Purpose; for he had an Occasion for a present Sum of Money to set him up in his Business: For, that he could not come at his Wife's Fortune, which was considerable, till she came of Age, which would be in about a Month's Time. Mr. *Fletcher* reply'd, We must see the Person whose Life we are to insure, before we can grant a Policy. A Meeting was appointed, and Mr. *Smith* brought his Wife with him to the
King's

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King's Arms Tavern on Ludgate-hill. This was Oct. 14, when, upon a View of the Woman, a Policy was granted.

When that Month was expir'd, he apply'd again to the Office for a Renewal of the Policy for another Month, pretending, he was mistaken, for that his Wife would not be of Age till *December*; and farther, if he could get the Policy renew'd, he could borrow 100 *l.* upon it of Mr. *Chawood*.

On these Considerations the Company granted him a Policy upon his Wife's Life, who, it must be observ'd, was all this While kept ignorant of every Thing that was transacted in the Affair. For, altho' she appear'd at their Meetings, that the Company's Agents might see her, in order to make their Report, yet *Smith* always caution'd them to mention nothing of what they were about.

The second Policy was taken out the 17th of *November*, and deliver'd to Mr. *Chawood* the 18th, about 5 or 6 o'Clock in the Evening; a few Hours after which she was murder'd in *St. George's Fields*; as soon as the Policy was deliver'd, *Smith* and his Wife went away together. *Chawood* being ask'd, Whether he had any Interest in getting the Policy for *Smith*, said, He had not; but that *Smith* having been very serviceable to him in a Fit of Illness he had in the *Fleet*; and telling him, that in a Month's Time he should come to the Possession of his Wife's Fortune, was induc'd to assist him in getting her Life insur'd, took out the Policy for him, and thought to have lent him 100 *l.* upon it.

Now, tho' here is no positive Proof, that his View in procuring a Policy on his Wife's Life, was to get the 200 *l.* by murdering her, yet his making Use of fraudulent Means to obtain the Policy,

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Policy, by pretending his Wife would be of Age in a Month, when she wanted near two Years of that Time, and her being murder'd the same Night, and within three or four Hours after the Policy was deliver'd to Mr. *Chawood*, amounts to a strong Presumption of his Guilt.

The next material Evidence against him, was that of the two Women, *Sampson* and *Cox*; who swore that they met him and his Wife in St. George's Fields between 10 and 11 o'Clock that Night the Murder was committed, and heard her say to him, *Where are you going?* To which he answer'd, *To New-Cross*; which lay directly contrary to the Way he and his Wife were going.

The next Morning the Women, hearing of the Murder, went to view the Corpse, and remember'd she was the same Person they saw the Night before with *Smith* in the Fields. And that *Smith* was the same same Person whom she saw with the Deceas'd, was thus prov'd. *Smith* being at that Time a Prisoner in the *Fleet*, and there appearing some suspicious Circumstances, when the Inquest sat on her Body, that he was the Person who murder'd her, the Coroner sent his Officer together with this *Sampson*, over to the *Fleet*, to see whether she knew him again. When they came there they found him in Company with a great Number of other Gentlemen. She immediately knew him, and pointed him out from all the rest; and when they came out, told the Officer, That the Man she had shewn him was the Person she saw in the Fields talking to the Deceas'd the Night the Murder was committed.

Against the Credibility of the Evidence given by these Women, *Smith* has objected, that they are Persons of infamous Characters, and therefore

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their Testimony ought not to be credited; and even went so far as to say, they were hir'd by the Insurance Office to say what they did to save the Money insur'd upon the Policy. But this is a Reflection too scandalous to be imputed to a Body of Gentlemen of Honour and Reputation, most of them Merchants, and who, as a Company, have very extensive Dealings. Setting, therefore, this idle Surmize aside, does it not appear highly probable from *Sampson's* Evidence, that *Smith* was the dividual Person who took away the Life of the Deceas'd? For she swears, That the Person whom she saw in *St. George's Fields* talking with the Deceas'd the Night she was murder'd. was the same Person she saw afterwards in the *Fleet*.

It was farther prov'd, That on the *Tuesday* after the Murder was committed, *Smith* says to Mr. *Davis* in the *Fleet*, in a ludicrous Manner, *Have you heard the Report? They say the Woman that was murder'd in St. George's Fields is my Wife, and that I murder'd her.* Now, Mr. *Davis* declar'd, That he was the first Person he had heard charge him with it; and I don't find that at that Time any-body suspected him of it. What then should induce him to talk thus of himself, unless he imagin'd that he was, or should be suspected of the Fact, and therefore endeavour'd to prepossess his Friends with an Opinion of his Innocence, by making a Jest of the Charge that he was guilty?

Another Circumstance strengthening the Probability of his Guilt, is, That the Morning after the Murder was perpetrated, it was observ'd, that his Thumb was cut. Being ask'd how it happen'd, at one Time he said it was by thrusting his Hand into his Pocket where he had a Penknife loose; at another Time, that it came by cutting
a Piece

a Piece of Bread; and at other Times, that he got it in a Quarrel about a Woman in the Street. Now what Occasion had he to tell this Story so many different Ways, unless he was afraid of being put to the Proof to shew in what Manner it really happen'd?

But there is an Evidence yet behind, which, I think, amounts almost to a Demonstration of his Guilt; which is that of the Watchman, who, as he was beating his Rounds between 12 and 1 o'Clock, heard a Voice say, *Don't murder me*; and going to the Place where he heard it, he saw a Woman leaning against the Rails, and a Man with her; she said to him, *What have I done, that you'd murder me?* The Watchman ask'd what was the Matter? The Man answer'd, *D—n you, what's that to you, she is my Wife; the Bitch is drunk, and I can't get her along.* The Court asking the Watchman, whether that was the Man? He said, he was, tho' he had not the same Cloaths on, nor a lac'd Hat.

Mr. Miller, the Deceased's Father, prov'd, That she would have been but 19 Years old, had she liv'd to the 12th of *December*, and that she had no Fortune to expect till the Death of an Uncle, and then she would have been intitled to an Estate of 30 *l.* a Year.

To contradict all this Evidence, and to make it appear that he could not possibly be guilty of the Crime charg'd upon him, he call'd two Witneses to prove, That he was at his Lodging in *Bell-Savage-Inn* upon *Ludgate-hill*, at the Time when this Murder was committed. The Tapster swears *Smith* came in between 10 and 11 o'Clock; but being ask'd whether *Smith* lay there that Night, he could not tell. The Chamberlain swore,
That

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That *Smith* came in about 12, and lay there; that his Thumb was cut, and bled very much, which he pretended was occasion'd by a Quarrel about a Woman of the Town.

Now, if we compare this Account with what the Watchman gave, we shall find but little Variation of one from the other. The Time the Watchman was crying his Rounds, we may reasonably suppose, was immediately after the Clock had struck 12. It was then he heard the Deceas'd cry out *Murder*; the Place was but a little Way from the Water-side; so that from the Time of perpetrating the Fact, till he came into his Lodgings, it could not be much above a Quarter of an Hour. And the Chamberlain says, it was *about* 12 when he came in; which is an uncertain Expression; and it might be half an Hour afterwards, and yet the Chamberlain pretty right in his Guess; especially if we consider, that the Chamberlain spoke as favourably of the Matter as possibly he could; for *Smith*, it seems, ow'd him 25 s. which he knew he must lose, if *Smith* was cast for his Life.

Thus have we given, as concisely as possible, an impartial View of the Evidence upon which this Criminal was convicted, and the Substance of what he had to say for himself; together with such Reflections, as naturally occur upon reading the printed Trial. This brings us on to our chief Purpose, in publishing these Sheets; namely, to give the Publick a very authentick Account of Mr. *Smith's* real Behaviour, and his true and undisguised Sentiments, after Sentence of Death had passed upon him, and at the near Approach of his fatal End. This we cannot do better than in the following Memoirs given us by the Rev. Mr.

Wilson,

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Wilson, who has the Vouchers for every Particular we shall offer.

A true Account, given by the Rev. Mr. Wilson.

WHEN I first visited him, I had some Reason to believe, as he had been brought up amongst the *Quakers*, that he had not been baptized; but upon putting the Question to him, he assured me he was, on his Marriage with the Daughter of the Reverend Mr. *Collins*, Rector of *Crayford*, in *Kent*; tho' he own'd he had not made so good a Use of that Sacrament as he ought to have done.

Whilst he was under Sentence of Death, I constantly visited him, and endeavoured to instruct him in the Principles of Christianity: He own'd he had made a bad Use of the good Instructions his Friends had given him; but he hoped there were some Remains of Mercy left for him. He frequently reproached himself, for acting contrary to his real Interest, and pursuing those Measures which directly tend to his Ruin and Destruction. He was informed how inconsistent it was with the Wisdom of GOD, and destructive of his Honour and Glory, if he should indemnify Sinners for the Breach of his Laws, without any Satisfaction made to his Justice; and, therefore, the only Way to be restored to his Favour, and to obtain Pardon for his Sins, was Repentance; which, thro' the Merits of CHRIST, would expiate his Guilt. And for a *Christian*, to perform this Duty aright, it was necessary that he understood the true Notion of Sin, how injurious it was to the Honour

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nour of God, how repugnant to his Laws, and how unbecoming his Creatures to provoke him. I told him, it was necessary he should recollect (as well as it was possible) those particular Sins which he had committed, that he might be the more humbled with a due Sense of his Guilt; and when with a serious Consideration he had viewed the most remarkable Errors of his Life past, he ought with a deep Sense of his Unworthiness, and an awful Regard to the Majesty of GOD, whom he had so much offended, confess them, and acknowledge himself justly to have deserved the Wrath and Vengeance which is threaten'd and denounced against Sinners, and afterwards humbly implore his Mercy for Pardon and Forgiveness, with a full Trust and Confidence in the Merits of our *Saviour*, who as a powerful Advocate is able to save All them that come to GOD by him.

All this he seemed to be sensible of, and said, he would endeavour to make the best Use of that little Time he had to live. Being pressed to confess his Sins, particularly that for which he was to die; he positively declared, he was innocent of it.

I am far from insinuating any Suspicion of his being wronged by the Verdict of his Country, being sure the Evidence against him was such as might convince the Jury of his Guilt. But I should be unjust to this poor Wretch, if I did not let the World know that he abounded with the same Protestations of his Innocence of the Fact he was to suffer for; for, in his most calm and serious Moments, when he seemed to have a strong and quick Sense of Religion, such an amazing Intrepidity at the nearest Approach of Death I never beheld, and such an entire Resignation in the Will of
GOD.

He

He was very earnest to receive the Blessed Sacrament: I told him, while I had so strong an Opinion of his Guilt, I was unwilling to give it him, till I saw Signs of his Repentance, by his confessing the Fact, or he gave me greater Reason to believe him innocent, by his giving some reasonable Account of his insuring his Wife's Life upon two false Pretences. He affirmed, it was to borrow Money upon the Security of the *Policy*; and pressed so earnestly, saying, he very well knew the Blessed Sacrament would be so far from being any Advantage to him in a State of unrepented Sin, that he should eat and drink his own Damnation; and, he read those Words of *St. Paul* very often; saying, Can you believe I should upon the Brink of Death so earnestly press to eat and drink my own Damnation? and added, How unhappy am I to be denied this common Privilege of every *Christian*! I endeavoured to convince him, that his Intention would be imputed by a just and all-seeing GOD to him as the real Act, as the withholding it could not be ascribed to him. But he could not but think, a Remembrance of his Redeemer, such an eating and drinking his Body and Blood, would be a Comfort to a sincere Penitent, tho' he owned he thought it an high Aggravation of an impenitent Guilt; and concluded, saying, I should not have died in perfect Peace, if I had been denied this Sacrament; but now I shall die in Peace. Seeing he had just Notions of the Sacrament, my Charity would not suffer me to deny him any longer so great a Comfort; and upon my signifying my Willingness to administer it to him, I never saw so great a Satisfaction and Joy in any one's Countenance, as in his; and from that Time, to the Time of his Execution, he was perfectly resigned.

signed. One Accident I will mention, as a Proof of this: When I was praying with him in his last Moments, some One from among the People flung a Piece of Dirt, which glancing upon me, struck him with some Degree of Violence; he without the least Emotion wiped his Face, and turning to me, said, Sir, I hope you have received no Hurt. His last Declaration of his Innocence was heard by many, immediately before his Death. I can only say, that his whole Behaviour hath given me the greatest Surprize. But it will be more satisfactory to give you his own Declaration, than my Surmises.

Godalming, Mar. the 26th, 1738.

Deare Child,

I Have received thy Letter, and have done all I can do for thee; the King will reprieve none that is condemned for that Fact thee art condemned for; not for Transportation, nor any how at all but down-right Death; if it was a Lord's Son that had committed Murder, he must have suffered Death for it; I beg of thee to make thy Peace with God, he is both ready and willing to forgive Truly sorrowful and repenting Sinners: There is a great many that will pray for thee, but that will not do without thy own Supplication to Jesus Christ, who I hope will have Mercy on thy poor never dying Soul: My Trouble is greater than I can express, to have my First-born to come to so miserable an End: Thy Sister Bett is here, who gives thee her dear Love, and dear Love is all I can send thee; I end with hearty Prayers for thy Wellfare in a future State.

From thy distressed Mother,

Hannah Smith.

GILL SMITH,

AS I am altogether a Stranger, and know not that ever I saw thee; but as I am sensibly touch'd with the unhappy Circumstance thou art under, and, in pure Compassion to thee, I offer a few Things, which I intreat thee maturely to consider——It is in vain to flatter thyself with any Hopes of Life, or a longer Time than is now allotted; which few Moments should not be spent in Company, who come to satisfy their Curiosity, and keep thee continually heated with Liquor, but in a constant steady Application of Mind to GOD, before whom thou art shortly to appear. Thou hast already appeared before a Tribunal here, hast had thy Trial, and the Voice of thy Country has declared thee guilty: At this Tribunal a Man may endeavour to hide his Crimes, profess Innocence, and deceive his Judges. Thou art now to appear before the Judge of all the Earth, whom it is impossible to deceive; and no Evidence but a Man's own Conscience will be necessary to condemn him: As this in a few Days must be thy Case, I beg thee, for thy Soul's sake, to spend the few Sands which are yet unrun, in a due Reflection of thy State. Take one Look towards Eternity, before thou art involved in it. Thy Crimes, very likely, have been great, and of the deepest Dye, but GOD is infinite in Mercy, and will forgive when we call upon him in Sincerity and a real repenting Soul. It is agreeable to his merciful Nature, to forgive Sinners; he has declared, that whensoever a Sinner returns, and repents, he will have Mercy on him, though his Sins are as Scarlet of the deepest Dye: Yet, if thou cries to him in the Bitterness of thy Soul, thou mayest thro' CHRIST the Mediator obtain Mercy and Forgiveness at the Hand of GOD; and such a merciful Saviour he is, that even his very Persecutors and Mur-

derers he prayed to his Father to forgive; Father! forgive them, was his Language; and he continues to do so still for repenting and returning Sinners. Oh, therefore, confess thy Sins, and cry to the LORD both Day and Night, the Inch of Time thou hast left, for Mercy, that, if possible, thou may'st obtain it; endeavour to undo as much as thou canst, by the Sincerity of thy Repentance, the Evils thou hast done; peradventure thou may'st have some Hopes of Forgiveness, before thou departs, and art no more seen: But, if thou continues to neglect these few precious Moments in thus exercising thy Mind, and suffer thyself to be deluded and entertained with Company, thou wilt drop with Amazement into Eternity, loaded with Sin and Transgression. As to the Murder thou art condemned for, thy own Conscience tells thee whether thou art guilty; and if so, can't thou without Horror think of appearing before the LORD, and make no Preparation for it? — It is thy immediate Business to retire and prostrate thyself, in the most humble, in the most sincere and devout Manner. — It is with a View to thy Good, I have writ this Letter; that, if thy Day of Visitation is not quite over, if thy Heart is not quite scar'd, and hardened, thou may'st be put on seeking for Forgiveness, and Salvation — Which, that thou may'st obtain, is the sincere Desire of

A STRANGER

Mr. Smith,

I Hope, by this Time, God has enabled you to make a full Confession of your Sins, to that worthy good Gentleman that attends you, that he may with Cheerfulness give you Absolution, and administer the Blessed Sacrament: From thence it is impossible to express the Joy you'll feel; tho' your Burthen is heav' that will make it light; and tho' your Sins are as Scarlet, that will make them white as

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Snow: Let me therefore intreat you, for God, and Christ's sake, that you delay not a Moment; think of the Joy there is over oae Sinner that repenteth more than great Numbers of just Persons, that need no Repentance. That this may be your happy Case, is the hearty Prayer of all your Friends here, and most sincerely so of
Sunday, 5 o'Clock. *Your Afflicted Friend,*
J. Davies.

New-Goal, March 29, 1738.

Dearest and best of Friends,

M*Y lying under Sentence of Death in this Place, for a Crime of the deepest Kind, which I have been found guilty of by my COUNTRY, you are no Stranger too; but that I am innocent of what I am to looe my Life for, I shall declare with my last Breat^h; and were I sure, by saying I was guilty, and at the same Time I am innocent, if I was sure I could save my Life by it, I would not say it. The Dead Warrant came down, Yesterday; and the High Sheriff came to me himself, last Night, and told me I must die in a very few Days; and also, I should be hang'd in Chains; but where, he could not say. My Time to die, I hear this Day, is fix'd for to Morrow Sevensight.*

I should be very glad to see you as often as you can spare Time. I desire very much to see Mrs. Davies. I am with the greatest Respect to you, and Mrs. Davies, your dying Friend,
Gill Smith.

Mr. SMITH's Last Declaration.

Reverend SIR,

April 10, 1738.

T*HE Relation I shall make is nothing but the Truth, in respect to some ill-natured Things the World has laid to my Charge.*

Imprimis, That horrid Crime laid to my Charge, in respect to an attempt made to poison my Mother. I do declare and call God to be my Judge, whom

I shall soon appear before, and as I hope for his Mercy, that so far from attempting to do any such Thing, it never so much as entered my Thoughts, nor, before this unhappy Affair, I never heard it laid to my Charge.

The next is in Relation to my first Wife's Death: I do, from my Soul, believe she died a natural Death; and I farther declare, that my Ruin was owing to her Death, having no body to take Care of my Business, when I was from Home, 'till after her Death along while. Every one who will be impartial, will allow her to have been *the best of Wives*, and that we lived as happy as any Couple in *Dartford*; and farther, that I could get nothing by her Death, but must be a Loser, otherwise besides the Loss of her, which was the greatest Loss I ever *had*. And some People, since my Confinement, and never before, to my Knowledge, charged me with making away with Mr. *Polhill's* Family, of *Horton*, who all the Country knows were my best Friends I had in the Country, and that I could never get any thing by their Deaths, but on the contrary, must be a Loser by their Deaths, they being very good Patients to me, besides other Friendships. And all the Country farther knows, at their Deaths my Sister, who after their Deaths came and lived with me, was Administratrix to the last that died, that then I would not be concerned in their Effects, although she desired me, but let her Brother be concerned for her, who afterwards run away with great Part of the Effects, 'till for fear of a Writ called *Ne exeat Regnum*, he was obliged to return. That Affair now is not quite ended, there being several Legacies now unpaid, relating to that Administration. The World has been so kind as to say, I debauched my Sister, since her Death, which I utterly deny, who died of the

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Small-Pox, two Years ago. By the same Rule they may cast the same Reflection on the whole Family, all the Sisters living at my House alternately, for some Years. I was seldom without one or the other of them. As

As for the Murther relating to my last Wife, that my Country found me guilty of, and for which I am to die this Day, I solemnly declare I am as innocent of it, as the new born Babe. All my Comfort is, I am going before a more just Judge, than I was before here. [*The remaining Part of the Sentence contains too gross a Reflection on the Justice of the Court, for us to publish.*] I recommend my Soul to the God that gave it me, believing, assuredly through the Merits of my blessed Saviour *Jesus Christ*, I shall enjoy eternal Happiness.

I farther do most humbly desire all, and every one, whom I have offended, that I do freely and heartily forgive all the World, wherein soever any hath offended me, or done me any Manner of Injury whatsoever, even as I do desire to be forgiven of God, and to be absolved from my Sins, for the Merits of my blessed Redeemer.

Your dying Friend, GILL SMITH.

P. S. *Ask Mr. Hayler for them Writings; I think he told me his Wife had them, in relation to my Father's Declaration, in respect to that poison as he called it.*

Remarks on the foregoing Declaration.

WE may, perhaps, be censur'd for a great deal of ill Nature, in endeavouring to blacken the Memory of a Man who has already suffered the Sentence of the Law. But if it be considered that the Person we are so free with, has play'd the Chicane all his Life-Time; and that, notwithstanding all his solemn Asseverations

of his Innocence, the Generality of the World have judged him guilty, not only of the Crime for which he suffered, but of many others of as villainous a Nature, sure no-body can be offended at our shewing the Weakness of his Defence, and that he prevaricated, even in the very Face of Death. This will appear pretty plain, by a few Observations on the foregoing Declaration

He solemnly declares, *that he never attempted the Death of his Mother, nor ever heard before that it was laid to his charge.* Now there are several living Witnesses, in the Country, who will aver, that he was often charged with it. But if there had been no such Proof, what does he mean by his Order above to Mr. *Wilson, To ask Mr. Hayter for the Writings in relation to my Father's Declaration in Respect to that Poison, as he call'd it?* Does not this shew that his Father had declared his Suspicion about the Poison, and that the Thing had been canvassed among his Friends? How then can he say, without the meanest Prevarication, to speak the best of it, that he never heard of his being charged with it?

The next criminal Imputation he endeavours to clear himself of, is the Death of his first Wife. He says, *I do, from my Soul, believe she died a natural Death.* If he did really believe this, why did he not give some Account of the Nature of the Distemper, of which she died? For his (then) Neighbours will tell you, that she died suddenly, and in strong Convulsions. He says he could get nothing by her Death. Yes, he might; a richer Wife. But as it was a general Report in the Country that he was guilty of her Death, he ought to have been very explicit and circumstantial in shewing the Improbability of his having a Hand in it. His saying, *That his Ruin was owing to her Death, because he had no body to take Care of his*

Business, is trifling; because, for this very Reason he ought to have taken the greater Care of it himself.

In the next Place, he declares his Innocence with Respect to the Deaths of several of Mr. *Polhill's* Family, who, he says, were his best Friends, and *that he should be rather a Loser than a Gainer by it.* 'Tis true, any Body would have thought so; but when it appear'd, as it afterwards did, that he got Seventy Pounds by their Deaths, by Means of his Wife's Sister, who was left Administratrix, the Wonder ceased, and the whole Country were firmly persuaded, that he had swam through this Sea of Blood, to attain his Ends; tho' he has the Hardiness to affirm, that he never, before his Confinement, knew that he was charged with it.

Farther; he utterly denies that he debauch'd his Wife's Sister; but, it so plainly appears, in the foregoing History of his Life, that they cohabited together as Man and Wife; that by her Means he was frequently furnished with Sums of Money, to serve his Occasions; and from many other concurring Circumstances, that a Man must be strangely prejudic'd, to believe him innocent of the Charge.

To conclude: If this unhappy Man was, as he solemnly declared, as well with his last Breath, as in the Paper above recited, entirely innocent of the Death of his last Wife, and of the other enormous Crimes, with which he was charged, we can only say, The World has done him a great Deal of Injustice: But, if he was really guilty, in every Respect, as there is the strongest Presumption, founded on the most probable circumstantial Evidential Evidence, that he actually was the Criminal he has been represented, and generally believed

believed to be, What can be said in his Favour? Or, how can we account for his solemn and repeated Denial of his Guilt? Is there any Room, even for Charity, to suppose that he had any Belief of future Reward of Punishments? For, can we imagine that a Man, persuaded of the Existence of a *Supreme Being*, and himself accountable to that *Being*, for all the Actions of his Life, should prevaricate in the very Article of Death, and go directly before his *Almighty Judge* with a Lie in his Mouth? The bare Thought of it is enough to shock Nature itself; for even the most confirmed Atheists, when Death has star'd them in the Face, have discovered some fearful Apprehensions of a future State. But Mr. *Smith* was so far from denying the Being of a *GOD*, that he could not be easy 'till he had taken the Sacrament, one of the most sacred Acts of our Religion, and thereby given the most solemn Attestation of his Belief, in all the Articles of Christianity; declaring, that if he took the Sacrament unworthily, which he did, if he took it to amuse the World with a false Testimony of his Innocence, that, in so doing, he set an eternal Seal to his own Damnation.

But, whether we believe him innocent, or guilty, his Example may be of Use to instruct us, that a loose and debauched Life frequently involves a Man in inextricable Difficulties, throws a Slur upon his most innocent Actions, and brings him into Judgment for Crimes, which, possibly, he may be a Stranger to.

F I N I S,

